

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-10. (CANCELED)

11. (NEW) A bracket comprising a sheet of material having a least one series of shaped apertures defined therein, wherein:

- a. the series defines a path along the sheet, and
- b. the shaped apertures facilitate the folding or cutting of the sheet material along the path.

12. (NEW) The bracket of claim 11 wherein the material is sheet metal.

13. (NEW) The bracket of claim 11 wherein each shaped aperture defined along the path has opposing corners defined along its diameter, with the opposing corners being aligned along the path.

14. (NEW) The bracket of claim 11 wherein the shaped apertures are at least substantially diamond-shaped.

15. (NEW) The bracket of claim 11 wherein:

- a. the sheet is elongated, and
- b. the shaped apertures have a major axis along which the shaped apertures have greater diameter than at adjacent axes, and
- c. the major axis is oriented along the length of the sheet.

16. (NEW) The bracket of claim 15 wherein the shaped apertures have at least two major axes.

17. (NEW) The bracket of claim 16 wherein the shaped apertures are shaped at least

substantially like a parallelogram.

18. **(NEW)** The bracket of claim 15 further comprising round apertures defined in the sheet, the round apertures being spaced about the shaped apertures.
19. **(NEW)** The bracket of claim 11 wherein the material bears at least one fold defined therein, the fold being situated at least partially along the path along which the shaped apertures are defined.
20. **(NEW)** The bracket of claim 19 wherein one or more additional series of shaped apertures are defined along the sheet adjacent the fold.
21. **(NEW)** The bracket of claim 20 further comprising round apertures defined in the sheet, the round apertures being spaced about the shaped apertures.
22. **(NEW)** A method of forming a bracket, the method comprising the steps of:
 - a. providing a sheet of material having a least one series of shaped apertures defined therein, the series defining a path along the sheet, and
 - b. folding or cutting the sheet material along the path to form a bracket.
23. **(NEW)** The method of claim 22 wherein:
 - a. the material is sheet metal; and
 - b. the shaped apertures along the path each have opposing corners defined along their diameters, the opposing corners being aligned along the path.
24. **(NEW)** The method of claim 23 wherein the shaped apertures are shaped at least substantially like a parallelogram.

25. **(NEW)** The method of claim 23 further comprising round apertures defined in the sheet, the round apertures being spaced about the shaped apertures.
26. **(NEW)** The method of claim 25 further comprising the step of inserting one or more fasteners into the bracket, each fastener being inserted into one of the round apertures.
27. **(NEW)** A bracket comprising a sheet of material having:
- a. shaped apertures defined therein, the shaped apertures being regularly spaced along linear paths defined on the sheet, wherein each shaped aperture:
 - (1) has a major axis along which the shaped aperture has greater diameter than at adjacent axes, and
 - (2) has its major axis aligned along the linear path along which the shaped aperture rests;
 - b. round apertures defined therein, the round apertures being spaced from the shaped apertures.
28. **(NEW)** The bracket of claim 27 wherein the round apertures are regularly spaced along linear paths.
29. **(NEW)** The bracket of claim 27 wherein the major axis of each shaped aperture is defined between opposing corners defined along the diameter of the shaped aperture.
30. **(NEW)** The bracket of claim 27 wherein the sheet of material also has a fold defined therein, the fold being defined along one of the linear paths along which shaped apertures are defined.